

Posted on Sun, Apr. 27, 2008

Roll in the barrel; roll out Beethoven

By Peter Dobrin Inquirer Music Critic

Lidia Kaminska is not like most musicians.

For one thing, her instrument is so rarefied she has to escort it back to its birthplace in Italy every year or so to be tuned.

For another, she left home at age 10 to pursue a life in music. Her parents, farmers, recognized her prodigious talent and delivered their daughter from a cozy 20-house village in Poland two hours from Warsaw to a large city with a good music school. She saw her family only on weekends, sometimes every other weekend.

But the thing that makes Kaminska, who recently moved to Philadelphia, most unusual among the musical company she keeps is her instrument.

She plays accordion.

No, not that one. Not the one racing through "Lady of Spain" at weddings, or pecking out polkas at Oktoberfest in Mifflinburg (not that there's anything wrong with that).

Kaminska traffics in the accordion (transcriptions) of Bach and Scarlatti, in the chewy dissonance of respected and adored high-art Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina, in the virtuosity of Liszt and Paganini.



Accordionist Lidia Kaminska, 30, in front of the Rodin Museum. The Polish-born Philadelphian is on a mission to rehabilitate the reputation of her instrument with classical music audiences.

JONATHAN WILSON / Inquirer Staff